

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 483

By Henry

A RESOLUTION To honor the memory of Mrs. Mary Jane Werthan.

WHEREAS, It was with great sadness and a profound sense of loss that the members of this General Assembly learned of the death of Mrs. Mary Jane Werthan of Nashville, one of Tennessee's most distinguished citizens; and

WHEREAS, Born in Nashville to David and Tessie Blum Lowenheim, Mary Jane was educated at Tarbox Elementary School and Hume Fogg High School before entering Vanderbilt University in 1925, where she was president of the newly formed Women's Student Government Association, the Women's Athletic Association, and of her sorority, Alpha Epsilon Phi; and

WHEREAS, As a senior at Vanderbilt, Mrs. Werthan was elected Lady of the Bracelet, the highest recognition accorded a female undergraduate by her peers. She was elected to membership in Phi Beta Kappa and received her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1929 with high honors; and

WHEREAS, As a young woman at a time when journalism was largely a male bastion, Mary Jane worked as a reporter for *The Tennessean*; and

WHEREAS, After her marriage to Albert Werthan in 1932, Mary Jane returned to Vanderbilt and studied social work, earning her Master's degree in 1934; and

WHEREAS, In 1943 Mary Jane Werthan became a founding member of the Children's Bureau, an organization designed to help meet the needs of Nashville's infants and children, and served as its president during the 1950's; she also played an integral role in the Bureau's 1951 expansion to include services to families, and its subsequent name change to Family and Children's Service; and

WHEREAS, She served with probity on the Family and Children's Service's National Board, and held the important positions of Chairman of the Personnel Standards Committee, Chairman of the National Conference, and Vice-President of the Board; she also served as a member of the Council on Social Work Education, which set the standards for social work education; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Werthan's vast experience at the organization's national level earned her the position of Vice-President of the National Conference on Social Welfare during the troubled 1960's in America; in 1960 she was a member of Tennessee's delegation to the White House Conference on Children and Youth; and

WHEREAS, In 1963 and again in 1975, Mary Jane Werthan was presented the Alpha Epsilon Phi sorority's Dorothy Gribetz Shapiro Award for Outstanding Alumna, a prestigious award given to the alumna "who has most distinguished herself through community and/or professional service"; and

WHEREAS, She became Vanderbilt's first female trustee with her election to the Board of Trust in 1964. Prior to joining the Board, she had served the University as an officer of the Vanderbilt Aid Society, as vice president of the Alumni Association, and as director of the Vanderbilt Development Foundation. She was also a trustee of the Joint University Libraries from 1967 to 1979, and during her tenure as a Vanderbilt trustee she served as chairman of the Student Affairs Committee, through which position she earned the respect and admiration of countless Vanderbilt students; and

WHEREAS, In 1967, the Columbia University School of Social Work selected Mary Jane for the Ethel M. Wise Special Merit Award, for outstanding volunteer service to her community.

The Nashville YWCA also honored Mrs. Werthan for her outstanding contributions and for involvement with more than two dozen organizations, all of which focused on the enrichment and the well-being of the people of Nashville and Davidson County; and

WHEREAS, In 1988, the Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center established the Mary Jane Werthan Award, given annually to honor three qualities characteristic of the first recipient for whom it is named: vision, persistence, and extraordinary skill in interpersonal and institutional relations; and

WHEREAS, The Family and Children's Service named its new central office headquarters the Mary Jane Werthan Building in 1994, an honor befitting this extraordinary woman's mission to help strengthen families in Nashville and Davidson County; in 1997 the Werthans were named Family of the Year by Family and Children's Service; and

WHEREAS, For more than 50 years, Mary Jane Werthan has been honored for her commitment to the community she loved so dearly, receiving awards from such prominent local and national organizations as the Columbia University School of Social Work, the YWCA Academy of Achievement, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the National Mortar Board Society; and

WHEREAS, She served as Nashville president of the National Council of Jewish Women, chaired the Women's Division of the Jewish Welfare Fund, and served on the board of the Jewish Community Council; and

WHEREAS, Mary Jane served with acumen as a charter member of the board of directors of Planned Parenthood and as a life member of the organization's advisory committee. When the Public Television Council was formed to support WDCN-Channel 8, she was a founding board member and continued to serve the board in that important position for twenty-five years. She was a founding officer and board member of the Nashville Symphony Guild and later was on the board of the Nashville Symphony Association, was the first president of the Friends of Cheekwood, and was a lifetime board member of the Tennessee Botanical Gardens and Fine Arts Center; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Werthan served with industry on the board of directors of the Community Chest, as a member of the Council of Community Service Metro Nashville Survey's executive committee, and as a chairman of the Red Cross Women's Initial Gifts Campaign. She was vice president of Vanderbilt University's Alumni Association and was the only woman member of the first Living Endowment Committee; the Nashville Junior Chamber of Commerce also named her its Woman of the Year; and

WHEREAS, Mary Jane's unflagging efforts in support of the Nashville community led to her involvement on the board of the National Conference of Social Welfare, the National Council on Social Work Education, and National Mortar Board, of which she was an Honorary Member; and

WHEREAS, Mrs. Werthan endowed the Mary Jane Werthan Chair in Judaic and Biblical Studies at Vanderbilt and the May and Morris Werthan Scholarship at the Divinity School. They also established the Werthan Chair in the School of Medicine and endowed the Mary Jane and Albert Werthan Visiting Lectureship in Dermatology; and

WHEREAS, Known for her enthusiasm, intelligence and thoughtfulness, she will be fondly remembered for her participation in nearly every aspect of community life in Nashville, especially in the fields of social welfare, education, and the arts; and

WHEREAS, Preceded in death by a daughter, May Shayne, Mary Jane Werthan will be dearly missed by her surviving family members, including her husband, Albert; her sister, Elizabeth L. Jacobs; her daughter, Elizabeth Werthan of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; her five grandchildren, Jonathan Shayne of Nashville, Tennessee, Elizabeth Shayne of Burlington, Vermont, David Shayne of Los Angeles, California, Sarah Bittenwieser of Northampton, Massachusetts, Julie Bittenwieser of Manhattan Beach, California; and her six great-grandchildren, David and Clifton Shayne of Nashville, Tennessee, William Shayne of Burlington, Vermont, Ezekiel and Lucien Baskin of Northampton, Massachusetts, and Daphne Paige Suh, and the late Claire Elizabeth Suh of Manhattan Beach, California; and

WHEREAS, A woman ahead of her time and true pioneer, Mrs. Werthan was a visionary driven to make her ideals a reality, thereby influencing every facet of her community; and

WHEREAS, The singular legacy of devotion to family and community that Mary Jane Werthan leaves behind will be long remembered and treasured by her friends and associates; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby pause to honor the memory of Mrs. Mary Jane Werthan, recalling fondly her life of purpose and commitment and her many valuable contributions to the Nashville community and to Tennessee, even as we mourn her death.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we extend our sympathy and condolences to Mrs. Werthan's family and many friends.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.